

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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INT-08 SCI-06 FEA-02 IO-14 MMS-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01

PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20 USIA-15 DRC-01 AID-20 TRSE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4514

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT LOUIS 0332

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MP PFOR PINT

SUBJECT: VISIT OF AF/E DIRECTOR TO MAURITIUS

1. DURING HIS VISIT IN MAURITIUS, APRIL 25-28, AF/E DIRECTOR WENDELL B. COOTE HAD DISCUSSIONS WITH, INTER ALIA, ACTING PRIME MINISTER RINGADOO, MINISTER OF HEALTH SIR HAROLD WALTER AND PERMANENT SECRETARY IN PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE, D. BURRENCHOBAY. (COOTE ALSO SAW SIR SEEWOOSAGUR RAMGOOLAM AT AIRPORT, APRIL 27, WHEN PM RETURNED FROM OVERSEAS -SEPTTEL.)

SUBJECTS COVERED (MAINLY IN TOUR D'HORIZON APRIL 26 WITH ACTING PRIME MINISTER RINGADOO); WERE AS FOLLOWS:

(A) IN RESPONSE TO COOTE'S QUESTION CONCERNING LEVEL OF RELATIONS BETWEEN US AND GOM, RINGADOO OBSERVED THAT ONE ITEM OF CONCERN-- GIVEN MAURITIUS'; POSITION ON KEEPING INDIAN OCEAN AS TROUBLE-FREE ZONE -- WAS PROPOSED PLAN FOR EXPANSION DIEGO GARCIA. RINGADOO QUESTIONED WHETHER, UNDER AGREEMENT TURNING OVER CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO AND OTHER ISLANDS TO BRITISH FOR FORMATION OF BIO SUCH, ACTION WAS PROPER. (B) NOTING COOTE'S REFERENCE TO FAVORABLE REACTION BY AUTHORITIES IN US TOWARD GOM CLEARANCE FOR ENTRY US NAVAL VESSELS IN DECEMBER ON SHORT NOTICE, RINGADOO REMARKED THAT MAURITIUS

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READY WELCOME THESE VISITS, RECOGNIZING NECESSITY FOR CREW LEAVE

AND REFUELING. (C) TURNING TO SUGAR, RINGADOO STRESSED THAT BECAUSE OF EARLIER WILD FLUCTATIONS IN PRICE OF VIRTUALLY SINGLE COMMODITY THAT MAURITIUS HAS TO OFFER, HIS GOVERNMENT FELT IT FAR PREFERABLE TO HAVE A GUARANTEED PRICE RATHER THAN TO RELY ON FORTUNES OF THE MARKET. RINGADOO STATED HIS GOVERNMENT HOPED THAT FAVORABLE CONSIDERATION WOULD BE GIVEN TO INCREASE IN MAURITIAN QUOTA UNDER SUGAR ACT NOW UNDER CONSIDERATION. COOTE ANSWERED THAT AUTHORITIES IN US GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN IMPRESSED WITH FACT THAT NOW, AS IN PREVIOUS YEARS, MAURITIUS HAD DIVERTED CARGOES TO SUPPLY US ON FIRST-COME, FIRST-SERVE BASIS; AND THAT THIS COMPLIMENTARY TO GOM.

(D) REFERRING TO RESULTS OF SEYCHELLES ELECTION, WHICH HAD JUST COME IN, RINGADOO OBSERVED THAT AN INDEPENDENT SEYCHELLES MIGHT WELL WORK IN COOPERATION WITH MAURITIUS ON A REGIONAL BASIS.

(E) REFERRING TO INFLATION AS ONE OF COUNTRY'S PRIMARY PROBLEMS AT THIS TIME, RINGADOO SAID THAT HE HOPED AMERICAN PL-480 SUPPLIES WOULD CONTINUE SINCE THESE WERE NECESSARY TO THE COUNTRY AND LENT TO MAINTENANCE ORDER AND STABILITY. (F) IN SIMILAR REFERENCE TO HIGH PRICES, RINGADOO SAID THAT ALTHOUGH NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES HAD VENTURED SUPPORT OF ARAB CAUSE DURING RECENT MIDDLE EAST HOSTILITIES, THERE WAS NOW DISILLUSIONMENT OVER HIGH COSTS OF PETROLEUM PRODUCTS. MAURITIUS ITSELF DID NOT YET SUFFER SHORTAGES SINCE BULK THIS PRODUCT COMES FROM IRAN, BUT EVEN HERE, OIL PRICES WERE STILL GOING UP. RINGADOO OPINED THAT FELLOW AFRICAN COUNTRIES WERE NOW PERHAPS FED UP WITH WORDS WHILE AWAITING ACTION AND RECONSIDERATION MIGHT BE GIVEN TO POLICY VIS-A-VIS ARAB STATES. (G) RINGADOO STATED THAT, MORE AND MORE, MAURITIUS, AS WITH OTHER COUNTRIES, WAS UNDER HEAVY PRESSURES TO OBSERVE A TYPE OF CONSENSUS POLITICS IN INTERNATIONAL FORA WHERE IT WAS FELT OBLIGATORY TO VOTE WITH NON-ALIGNED MAJORITY, EVEN THOUGH PARTICULAR SUBJECT MATTER AT HAND MIGHT NOT BE OF PRESSING CONCERN TO INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES THEMSELVES.

2. COMMENT: RINGADOO'S OBSERVATIONS, PARTICULARLY UNDER CATEGORY (A) ABOVE, WERE INTERESTING SINCE HE SEEMED TO CONFUSE MAURITIAN POSITION ON DIEGO GARCIA WITH THE UK-MAURITIUS DEFENSE AGREEMENT. RINGADOO SPOKE (ERRINGLY, WE BELIEVE) ON THE BIO ACCORDS AS PROVIDING FOR EXPANSION OF THESE FACILITIES INTO A BASE ONLY IF MAURITIAN DEFENSE NEEDS CALLED FOR SUCH TO BE DONE.

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